

The Teaching of American Ideals—I

Final Report of the Committee on a Study of The Teaching of American Literature

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For the past three years, the Curriculum Committee of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English has conducted a study of the teaching of American literature in the high schools of Illinois. This study has progressed through three successive stages: (1) an attempt to gain, by the use of a questionnaire, a picture of how American literature was being taught in Illinois high schools as of 1947; (2) an investigation of English teachers' statements of what they considered American ideals; and (3) experiments conducted in a few schools by teachers who were interested in helping students grow in the direction of American ideals.

Results of the first questionnaire were published in the *Illinois English Bulletin* of December, 1947. A summary of teachers' statements of American ideals together with an annotated bibliography of *English Journal* articles relating to teaching for American ideals (1943-1948) appeared in the December *Bulletin* of 1948. The third stage of our curriculum study has been completed. Six teachers in six different schools of the state have written stories of how they each taught a class during the second semester of 1948-1949 with objectives centered upon the growth of students in American ideals. These stories reflect varied situations—students

EDITOR'S NOTE: In this issue are two of the accounts described in Miss McHarry's statement. Four other accounts, involving different types of schools, different communities, different personalities, and different techniques, will be printed later in this academic year. The December issue of the *Bulletin* will be devoted to an annotated bibliography listing nearly three hundred books useful in units dealing with American living as reflected in American literature.

developing sensitivity to social inequalities and doing something about them; students of low academic abilities finding their tongues loosed and their feelings of inferiority reduced as they engage in the democratic processes of cooperative activity; superior students finding rich meanings through reading and discussing American ideals set forth in books, magazines, newspapers, and movies. These stories are records of experiments in the direction of reading, writing, speaking, and listening experiences for *every boy and girl* in the English classroom, experiments in finding values richer than mere information about books and writers in the English teaching-learning situation.

The Curriculum Committee presents also an annotated bibliography of books related to American life and living. This bibliography, prepared by Miss Marguerite Tupper, is one of standard books which might well be found in a high school library. They have been organized and annotated for the use of teachers interested in using American ideals as a springboard for their classroom activities.

The Curriculum Committee of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English reports the completion of the Study of the Teaching of American Literature. It expresses gratitude to the five hundred English teachers of Illinois who made the study possible, to those teachers who conducted the experiments, to those who submitted units on the teaching of American literature, to Miss Tupper and Miss Jones who prepared bibliographies, and to the Illinois Association for its financial support.

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AN EXPERIMENT IN A SMALL RURAL COMMUNITY

By ALICE LEPPERT

Maple Park Community High School

If you were to travel some fifty miles west of Chicago on the main line of the Northwestern Railroad, you would find your train passing through the little farming community of Maple Park. In days of slower transportation, this village was a trading center for all the surrounding area, and today, even with the necessity for its existence gone, it remains the hub of a busy, closely knit, socially adequate group of rural people who have little interest in, or need for, the big city which is geographically so near and yet seems so far removed. The population of the village itself is approximately four hundred, and the school, in addition to serving the town children, acts as the center of a huge circle with a twelve mile radius, from every section of which children are brought in buses to the school. The Maple Park High School enrollment is about ninety-five, and there were twenty-three pupils in the English III class in which the work with the teaching of American ideals in conjunction with American literature was done.

In preparation for the work of the semester, I made the following outline of my general objectives and ideals:

- I. To appreciate
 - A. Our heritage
 1. Equality of opportunity
 2. Educational advantages
 3. Freedoms
 4. Democratic government
 5. Influence of other nations
 - B. The fact that life is good and worth living
 - C. Our nation as it is presented in songs, poems, and stories
- II. To be aware of
 - A. What America promises each individual
 - B. The development of American literature
 - C. Our obligation to the future of America
 - D. Tremendous problems solved in the past and hope for the future

III. To achieve certain goals

- A. The ability to express ourselves and to evaluate and understand others
- B. To develop some realization of the joy, friendships, and knowledge to be gained from books
- C. To think logically and evaluate materials and conclusions
- D. To develop some ability in creative writing as we discuss the techniques and development of American literature

While one semester is a very short time in which to accomplish all of these aims, I think the detailed material which follows later in this report indicates that we at least touched on most of the points and covered several of them quite thoroughly.

As the table on page 5 indicates, our group was just average as far as ability was concerned, and I think it is not unjust to say that these boys and girls are quite below the average city group in background and experience.

During the first week of the semester, we discussed the project as a whole and the part we at Maple Park were to play in it. The children were interested, and some were skeptical because to them this was a startling new idea. Their previous school experience had always been with textbooks, workbooks, and specific day-to-day assignments. However, anything different is an adventure, and they suggested that since we were dealing with ideals, we probably should begin by forming a definition of ideals to which all of us could subscribe. This led to a good class discussion period, and the following is the definition they finally accepted and to which they referred frequently during the remainder of the semester: "An ideal is an unwritten goal toward which we strive as individuals, as a group, or as a nation."

The next step was to make a list of the various areas or relationships in which we have ideals and the following list resulted:

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Personal | 4. Vocational |
| 2. Family | 5. National |
| 3. Community | 6. International |
| a. School, educational | |
| b. Religious | |
| c. Recreational | |

Child	Age	Sex	Grade	Physical Health	(California Personality Inventory) Mental Health	Social Adjustment	Activities	First Interests (Kuder Preference Record)	Outside Work	Home Conditions	Parent's Occupation	(Otis & Terman) Group I. Q.	Illinois Testing General Ability Rank	Program Language Ability Rank	Child
1	17	M	11	good	fair	fair	F.F.A., music	mechanical	help at home	good	farming	90	0	0	1
2	17	M	11	good	fair	fair	athletics, newspaper	social service	help at home	good	local merchant	101	5	6	2
3	17	M	11	good	fair	fair	athletics, music	scientific	odd jobs	step-father	factory work	92	2	1	3
4	16	F	11	fair	poor	poor	newspaper, music	music	help at home	good	farming	107	6	6	4
5	17	M	11	fair	excellent	excellent	G.A.A., F.H.A. F.F.A.	mechanical	help at home	good	farming	97	6	4	5
6	17	M	11	good	excellent	excellent	athletics	mechanical	odd jobs	fair	retired	92	1	0	6
7	17	F	11	good	poor	poor	G.A.A., F.H.A.	clerical	help at home	good	farming	110	5	4	7
8	17	M	11	good	fair	fair	F.F.A.	help at home	good	farming	100	1	1	8
9	17	F	11	fair	fair	fair	cheerleader, F.H.A., G.A.A.	music	help at home	broken	waitress	100	2	2	9
10	17	F	11	good	good	good	music, F.H.A., G.A.A.	social service	help at home	good	farming	101	2	3	10
11	17	M	11	good	good	good	F.F.A.	mechanical	help at home	good	farming	99	2	1	11
12	17	F	11	good	excellent	poor	G.A.A., F.H.A.	artistic	help at home	broken	farming	106	6	5	12
13	16	M	11	good	excellent	good	F.F.A.	mechanical	help at home	good	farming	128	9	9	13
14	17	F	11	fair	fair	good	music, F.H.A., newspaper	scientific	help at home	good	farming	103	5	5	14
15	16	M	11	good	fair	fair	F.F.A., newspaper	computational	help at home	good	farming	111	6	8	15
16	16	M	11	good	fair	poor	athletics	scientific	none	fair	local business	116	8	8	16
17	18	F	12	good	excellent	excellent	G.A.A., F.H.A.	social service	none	step-mother	farming	105	5	5	17
18	17	M	11	good	excellent	good	athletics, music	music	none	step-mother	factory work	96	1	2	18
19	17	M	12	good	fair	fair	F.F.A., music	music	help at home	good	farming	100	19
20	17	M	11	good	good	good	F.F.A.	mechanical	help at home	good	farming	100	6	5	20
21	17	M	11	good	excellent	excellent	F.F.A.	mechanical	help at home	step-father	farming	96	5	3	21
22	17	M	11	good	excellent	good	music, athletics	music	help at home	good	local business	102	5	5	22
23	17	F	11	good	excellent	excellent	G.A.A., music	social service	none	excellent	local business	97	3	4	23

To make certain each child had worked out some concept of an ideal and was beginning to think of ideals as something practical and usable, we formulated theme titles which would give us further opportunity for thinking and expressing ourselves in terms of ideals. I have listed several of these titles below:

An Ideal School

How Religion Influences My
Ideals

What Ideals Mean to Me

Ideals of Early Americans

My Personal Heritage of
Ideals

Ideals in Community Life

Family Ideals

My Ideals for My Country

Ideals of a Nation

My Personal Ideals

My Ideal Life

An Ideal World

Our Heritage of Ideals

My Vocational Ideals

As usual these themes were due in three parts: an outline, a corrected first draft, and the finished paper.

Now that all of us were thinking together and had begun to understand each other's language, we seemed ready to undertake the real work of the course. Our semesters are divided into three six-week grading periods, and the course easily divided into three projects or units. The first might be called: "Ideals as We Find Them Expressed in Revolutionary and Patriotic Period Writings," the second: "Home and Community Ideals," the third: "Educational Ideals as Expressed in Current Newspapers and Periodicals."

"Ideals as We Find Them Expressed in Revolutionary and Patriotic Period Writings" was suggested as an obvious unit for us to study because as the first semester closed, we had begun to discuss the earliest writing done in America, and we had worked up to the Revolution and the extremely patriotic period which followed it.

The first step in our study was to examine carefully our library to see what materials were available for our use. We have no public library in our community, and use of the libraries in other larger towns around us presents the two problems of distance and expense.

Lists of both fiction and non-fiction books, complete with author and call number, were compiled as a class project, mimeographed, and distributed to each child. It was understood that these were merely aids to be used in selecting books for individual reading and that anyone would be free to read anything else he chose.

At this point we decided against formal book reports in favor of a file card for each child on which he recorded notes concerning the books and articles he read. These notes included the title, author, date, a bit about the main characters, and most important of all, the pupil's evaluation of the material in terms of ideals. These cards were to play an important part in the grade each student earned.

Our next step was to present projects or problems which the children worked on individually and in groups. These problems were suggested by the pupils themselves, and each child chose what he wished to do and the method he wished to use in solving his problem. It was understood that these problems and their solution would make up another part of the grade and that the careful selection of books from the bibliography provided by the class would furnish background material.

The third part of this unit consisted of material which everyone in the class read. We used such literature as George Washington's *Farewell Address*, Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, and Patrick Henry's *Speech in the Virginia Convention*. Also at this time everyone in the class started reading *The House of Seven Gables*.

Some interesting projects coming from this unit were:

1. A paper contrasting national ideals and foreign policy as expressed in Washington's *Farewell Address* and in President Truman's *Inaugural Address*.
2. Reports comparing various phases of life in Benjamin Franklin's time with life today. Such ideas as attitudes toward school, learning, family life, character education, and good books were discussed.
3. A comparison of "a learned gentleman" of Revolutionary days and today.
4. The amount contributed to education by fathers of both periods.
5. A particularly interesting paper entitled "What is an American?"
6. A comparison of first ladies—Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Roosevelt.
7. What elements "made for peace"—then and now?
8. Do national leaders today show as strong religious faith as Patrick Henry exhibited?

At the close of the unit the group compiled the following list:

National Ideals as Expressed After Studying Colonial Literature

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. Trust and agreement among people and nations | 6. Democratic government |
| 2. Tolerance | 7. Religious freedom |
| 3. Freedom from jealousy | 8. Economic freedom |
| 4. Dignified problem solving | 9. Good leaders |
| 5. Security and freedom from fear | 10. Sound family life |

A second list which states the qualities of a good citizen in an ideal nation is interesting :

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Dutiful | 5. Loyal |
| 2. Trustworthy | 6. Cooperative |
| 3. Educated | 7. Appreciative of heritage |
| 4. Patriotic | 8. Law abiding |

And so our first unit came to a close with an examination on some of the material all of us had read and an opportunity for each child to express himself on the progress of the course to date.

As we discussed possible topics for our second unit, there seemed to be more enthusiasm and assurance in the group. We were becoming acquainted with this new project and beginning to like it. The title finally chosen was "Home and Community Ideals." The students selected this field because it was close to their interest and experience, and it turned out to be the most fascinating unit of the three. There was more genuine feeling and lively discussion here than in either of the other areas.

Our general outline of procedure was approximately the same as we had used before: first a bibliography and then problems to be solved or discussed. Immediately it became evident that we would have quantities of material from which to select our topics for discussion. In all, the class listed some twenty-five topics for consideration. Some of these which were worked out individually or in small groups follow :

1. Is the American home ceasing to be a center of entertainment and ideals?
2. Does the change of time and ways sometimes create a gulf of misunderstanding between members of two generations?
3. In your opinion is adverse criticism as effective as praise?
4. Do women of today appreciate what Susan B. Anthony did for them or do they take their voting privilege too much for granted?
5. Can a high school or college education bring enough additional income in a lifetime to compensate for the years of work and not earning?

We had three rousing panel discussions during this period. The first dealt with the differences between rural and city youth, the second attempted to answer the question, "Is the family as a unit becoming less closely knit?," and the third was prepared as a wire recording to be played at a meeting of the committee on the teaching of ideals. This last discussion was entitled, "Vocational Ideals of Rural Teen Agers."

During this period we completed our reading of the *House of Seven Gables* and also read several other things such as *Our Town*

and various stories and essays dealing with family and community life.

At the close of this unit the children made several lists of ideals to which they felt they could subscribe. Two of the most interesting follow:

Community Ideals

Community ideals seem to divide into two sections: the qualities of an individual in an ideal community and the characteristics of the community itself.

Individual Qualities

1. Must help community grow and prosper
2. Must show friendliness
3. Must show neighborliness
4. Must vote and know what he is voting for or against
5. Must be loyal to and support church activities
6. Must give to church and charities
7. Must show cooperation
8. Must be healthy
9. Must be peace loving
10. Must be open minded and tolerant
11. Must have courage of convictions
12. Must have optimism—success result of honest effort
13. Must have no racial or religious prejudice
14. Must be loyal, honest, and unselfish

Community Qualities

1. Should have good government
2. Should have good schools and churches
3. Should be clean and sanitary
4. Should have wholesome recreation for teenagers as well as adults
5. Should have laws for safety of all concerned
6. Should have responsibility of young people to rebuild community spirit
7. Should make the school center of community life
8. Should have homes, not houses
9. Should have good leaders
10. Should have goals set toward which to work
11. Should have individual home ownership
12. Should have good transportation

The Home

The home's main responsibility is to set up "a standard of perfection that a child may use to judge the world."

Ideal home should:

1. Have understanding.
2. Consider luxury second to understanding.
3. Be clean and have neat appearance.
4. Have respectability.
5. Have cooperation, which leads to understanding.
6. Be a place to go when you are lonely and need help.
7. Have adults who set a good example and teach right from wrong.
8. Be a place to bring friends and find a welcome.
9. Have parental supremacy without dictatorship.

10. Have adults who help teenagers adjust to environment.
11. Have participation in religious activities.
12. Have social interests.
13. Have adults who are interested in school and its activities.
14. Have adults who are happy and successful in work they are doing.
15. Have children included in recreational plans of family.
16. Have children who participate in running home.
17. Have mutual respect and consideration among members.
18. Have enough room to spread out and have hobbies and pets.

While we were discussing differences between urban and rural teenagers, many points were brought out, but we reached two general conclusions:

1. Success in either situation requires an equal amount of work.
2. The same recreation is available to both groups, but transportation furnishes an added problem to the rural person.

Again our six weeks' test covered some material all of us had read and a paper in which each individual expressed his own ideals concerning some phase of home or community life.

As the third period arrived, we launched our new unit after we had attempted to find the thing in which all of us were the most interested. We finally decided that the school situation in our own community and in the state was of concern to all of us. This decision was reached because our own school has recently been included in a unit district, the areas around us are attempting to solve like problems, the local papers are full of information for and against various groups, and there is the ever-present rumor and gossip. In addition to providing facts, this study presented excellent opportunities for a unit on newspaper evaluation much like the one by Georgine B. McDonald which was published in the March, 1949, *Illinois English Bulletin*.

There were four parts to this last project:

1. Daily reading of any available newspapers and presentation in class of any material dealing with the educational situation locally, state-wide, or nationally.
2. An analysis by each pupil of the particular newspaper with which he came in contact regularly. This analysis was based on the twenty points listed by Miss McDonald.
3. A scrapbook compiled by each student containing the articles he had found dealing with education.
4. A class collection of bulletins, pamphlets, and other information obtained by writing to other schools in Northern Illinois whose philosophy and methods differed from the traditional with which we were familiar.

I think we found this last project particularly broadening and practical. Several children commented that they had read more newspapers in those six weeks than ever before in their lives, they gained some facts about a situation interesting and vital to them, they became aware that all schools are not conducted in an identical manner, and they learned to judge and evaluate the newspapers with which they came in contact.

So our semester ended, and the most important part of our final examination was a paper by each student, done outside of class, in which he evaluated the course. The following quotations taken from these papers are significant:

"Knowing what our ideals are has helped us to work harder to live up to our ideals and working in a group has shown us how much our ideals differ. Learning to watch for ideals when I read has helped me get more enjoyment out of books." Pupil Number 14

"I have become more conscious of American ideals, people, affairs of the world, and school problems. The class as a whole seems more interested in class discussion and all of us seem to be trying to put our ideals into practice." Pupil Number 22

"Before the semester was over, I learned to read more and like it." Pupil Number 13

"This course helped me to understand my parents better and to appreciate what they do for me." Pupil Number 7

"This semester's work has helped me to express my thoughts in writing more effectively and to think of others as well as myself." Pupil Number 23

"In discussing home and community life, I became conscious of the fact that I was very lucky to have a family who share their problems and entertainment." Pupil Number 17

"I wish we had longer to work with this type material." Pupil Number 3

"My ideals have not changed but have developed during the semester." Pupil Number 9

"In this study of ideals for ourselves, the family, the community, the nation, and the world, I have learned that you cannot sit back and 'let the rest of the world roll by' without helping to keep it rolling. I have learned to take a deeper interest in things about me, not just the things which I can reach out and take, but the ones miles away which I must work for or strive toward. I realize now that I'm not the only one in the world who is trying for success and a full life." Pupil Number 4

During the semester some of the students complained that they were spending too much time on this one course and that too much

outside reading was expected, but it seemed that they thought the effort was justified by the time the year ended.

From my point of view, I feel the following conclusions are fair:

1. We found more opportunity for speaking, writing, and reading activities. Approximately 225 books were read as outside reading during the semester by this group of 23.
2. Each student built up a wider background of general information.
3. Each class session was interesting to the pupils as well as myself.
4. There was evidence of an awareness of ideals and an attempt to put these into practice.
5. It is possible less traditional American literature material was covered.

There was interest and cooperation exhibited throughout the semester by the other members of the faculty and the administration, and my feeling is that everyone concerned considered the experiment highly successful and a semester well spent.

AN EXPERIMENT IN AN INDUSTRIAL AREA

By HETTY PICK

Granite City Community High School

There were thirty-four of us altogether—one teacher, eighteen junior girls and fifteen junior boys. We were all nervous and a bit fearful—for different reasons, of course. They were bothered over whether they would succeed with the English VI course; their teacher, over whether the course would succeed with them. It was a good class—lively third year students from middle-class homes, intelligence quotients 94 to 123.

We began by discussing the ways in which American literature could be presented—types, chronology, a combination of the two, problems. The students were encouraged to discuss the matter freely with one another and with parents and to return with a decision. After three rather hectic class hours, we reached a decision. We would do without a basic text and substitute for it our own problems, getting materials for solution wherever we could find them.

Now all we needed was to begin. For want of a better way to initiate anything so indeterminate, I simply started with the question, "What would you like to know about the contemporary world?" There was a brief silence. Then the answers came—seventeen of them, some significant, some trivial. But every one was serious. The next day found us settled upon one—a problem growing out of an incident occurring in a city a few miles distant. Some Negro students had been refused instruction in a school for white students only, an event causing a mild flurry of excitement in the towns nearby.

We discussed the problem informally, presented arguments for and against the action toward the Negroes, read the newspaper accounts, and tried to get at the facts. The incident passed quietly; nothing happened to make matters better or worse, but in our class it served as a springboard for the plunge we were about to take.

We called our first unit "Intercultural Relations." Our first discussion was concerned with a definition of such terms as prejudice, minorities, and stereotypes. We listed stereotypes in literature, radio, and movies and pointed out the evils of substituting them for people as they really are. In groups varying in size from four to twelve we described in paragraph form such recog-

nizable types as the Negro, the hillbilly, the farmer, the school teacher, the Indian, the immigrant. These we used for bulletin board display. They became the source of many questions and discussions. Our next step was individual reading of many books—fiction and non-fiction, all of which formed the basis of both written and oral reports. In class I read to them and we discussed together the little book *Probing Our Prejudices*. All the foregoing material served to broaden our point of view and provide material for intelligent discussion.

The next step was to learn how to combat prejudice in people we met. The methods were listed and experiences were related informally. We followed this discussion with another group activity—this time with groups of three. Each group created a situation in which one member tried to convince the other two that the prejudices they held were wrong. Part of the groups chose the wrong way to convince their friends; the rest chose the right way. Following the brief presentations the right ways and wrong ways were listed in two columns. All of this involved consideration of such faulty practices as getting angry, quarreling, name-calling, refusing to listen, ignorance of facts, etc. It was, of course, an artificial piece of work, but it was the only practical way I could think of to learn how to change people's views. Students were urged to make use of the right ways of convincing their friends, but there was little opportunity for me to judge whether or not they gained from the classroom experience.

The final activity of the group was to cooperate with a class in social problems in sponsoring a trip to a St. Louis movie which was advertised as one dealing with the subject of intolerance—*The Boy with Green Hair*. The following day we discussed the weaknesses and virtue of the movie as an instrument for teaching understanding and tolerance and as an artistic production.

For evaluation I devised a test to see whether the students understood the meaning of prejudice, how prejudices are formed, the effects of it both on the prejudiced one and his victim, and how one goes about overcoming prejudice.

Our second adventure in learning came in a manner as casual as the first. The students almost unanimously decided to study Russia. Russia was in the headlines; *Life* magazine was running a series of articles on it; they were curious. On the board we listed the topics they wanted to study—the people, the geography, the history of the revolution, the ballet, the government, some famous authors, the schools, how the people live. We combined some and

divided others, broke up into groups determined this time by *interest*, rather than by friendship, combed the libraries—school and public—for material and went to work. There were reports, maps, diagrams, and panel discussions. At the close of the study I helped them to summarize what they had discovered through reading, laying particular emphasis on, first, what was good and what was bad about Communism and, second, the basic differences between it and democracy. In this unit they found that listening was important since the subject was so huge that they could not hope to cover it all either in a group or as individuals. They soon saw the need for limiting the subject they were working on and for reading to get the information they were seeking. The evaluation was a test which they found rather hard. It was not a particularly successful venture, largely because they had undertaken too ambitious a project. Later we tried to determine why it had been less enjoyable than other projects. The consensus was that time had been too limited for so exhaustive a study.

After this rather strenuous experience everyone was ready for something different. Several heated discussions ensued, and they decided on "Leisure Time" as a project. The procedure was as before—a general discussion, planning, division into groups, work plans, reports. It would take too long to tell in detail all the activities that went on. One group demonstrated and explained major sports in other countries; another, minor sports in America. One took vocal music, another, classical music, a third, popular music, including—Heaven help us—"bebop." A group presented the dance—folk dance, ballet, tap, acrobatics. Another took the movies. A group of girls presented magazine reading—particularly, the cheap love story variety. Their report was hilarious. We even had two boys who insisted on studying parlor tricks and magic. Their report was clever. Some went to great lengths to make their work interesting. They borrowed equipment; one boy built his equipment in the pattern shop. A boy reported on his hobby of ship-model building and held the class fascinated for an hour with his clever explanation and exhibition of his work. We watched dances and listened to all kinds of recordings from Blues to Beethoven. It was the most exhilarating experience I have ever had, and the youngsters loved it.

Then it was spring; school was drawing to a close. Rather reluctantly we talked about the last project. What should it be? We spent several days tossing about first one and then another idea. At last, we came back to literature and decided to read novels

to find out how they depict American life. This time we divided into such groups as had read novels dealing with country and city life; historical novels; and novels dealing with economic problems. We had one minority group who chose to make a study of the comics and try to determine to what extent they are really harmful. We spent class hours reading, the reading being guided by a set of questions for each group. The work was divided, and the study culminated in a panel discussion in which the guide questions were presented by different members of the group. One of the last hours we spent in writing a short individual report on the novel, and in another we evaluated the entire course.

Since, in our school, final exams are required, I talked the situation over with the students, and at length asked them to be ready on examination day to write on this question, "What democratic practices have been carried out in this class? What undemocratic practices have been active in this class?" In addition I added to their final test a question summarizing the work on prejudice, one on Russia, and one on how the novel depicts American life. The papers, I thought, were good, and I believe the students enjoyed writing them. They did not study for the final because to do so was impossible. They had to rely on what they had actually learned. I believe that the pupils in the class were pleased with the results. I hope that they are better citizens as a result of it.

Pupil Organization

We elected a class chairman, who was helpful in conducting many of the class activities. I was fortunate in having in him a very dynamic person. Much of the success of the class was due to him.

We had a bulletin board chairman who received and arranged on our large bulletin board the stacks of clippings that came in daily. She kept a record of all who contributed, and I used it as one of the means of arriving at marks at the end of grade periods.

We had an active communication committee which wrote letters to our General Assembly whenever the proposed legislation affected what we were studying. They sent letters to a St. Louis theater asking the management to reconsider its practice of segregation. They wrote other letters to radio programs urging speakers to work for tolerance and understanding. Some of the letters were answered, much to their delight.

Other committees were appointed as the need for them arose.

Activities

Movies

Questionnaires polling the school on such things as radio and movies

Demonstrations

Panel discussions

Skits to illustrate certain procedures

Keeping individual reading records of all reading done during the semester

The Course as I See It

Perhaps the most valuable result of this experiment has been an awakened interest on the part of the pupils in the world about them. Since school has convened for the present semester, they have gone on to a standard course in literature. Even so, they continue to drop into their old classroom to call my attention to movies, books, and articles related to the units we studied.

Their interest in the class was keen. It was seldom necessary to remind them of their obligation to their work. They resented the absence of anyone in their group, thereby improving the regularity of attendance. They were alive and responsive as no other of my classes ever has been.

A few of their own evaluations follow:

"Of all my high school courses I like this one best. We have had fun, but we learned a lot."

"A very interesting and informative course. I think it should be a regular course in place of American literature."

"This course has been one of enjoyment and pleasure in just working. The things we have discussed have helped me quite a bit to change my views on people. These have been the best weeks I have ever spent in an English class."

"This course has been to me a stepping stone into friendship—friendship with my fellow classmates and a new understanding of my teachers. I was shy and unsure, afraid to speak, but now, well, we are all friends, and it is so different."

"This is the only course that has kept my interest in the spring, for I'm very allergic to spring fever. It seems that when you choose what to do and how you want to do it, you go ahead and finish it without losing interest."

"I feel that I have learned a great deal. This type of course gives one a chance to mix with the group, learn how to work with others, and it's dealing with problems that we will eventually have to face."

"We've learned that there's more in life than we've ever stopped to think about."

"It (the class) gives pupils a way of going about problems and finding out about them."

The foregoing were taken from thirty-two unsigned short statements about the course. Only two pointed out possible deficiencies. They are given below:

"The student learns facts which he will not learn anywhere else—facts which are vitally important. The student also learns how to combat falsehoods with his acquired knowledge.

"*The only* thing I would like to have is more American literature as in the text book."

"I have liked the course very much, but I think I didn't learn enough about different authors in American literature. It will be harder in English VII if we don't know some of the authors." (English VII is English Literature.)

I am not quite so enthusiastic over the course as were my students. As I look back over it now, I feel that there was too little emphasis on literature and too much on social problems. The course provided no study of the various art forms—study that I believe is essential if students are to make wise choice in reading materials. The course lacked logical order, although the units themselves were complete. I do not know whether what one gains is sufficient to overcome what one loses in such a procedure.

Of this one thing I am certain, however—never before have I had such an exciting teaching experience.

HAVE YOU RENEWED?

This is the last issue of the *Bulletin* that can be sent to those who have not renewed their subscriptions and their membership in the I. A. T. E. To avoid missing any of the important articles in forthcoming issues, renew now. Send your check to J. N. Hook, 121 Lincoln Hall, University of Illinois, Urbana.

Don't forget to be on the alert for excellent writing by your students—any prose or poetry that can be considered for publication in the *Bulletin*.

THE MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The executive committee of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English met at 9 a. m. in Room 123 Gregory Hall, October 29, 1949.

Miss Dilley reported the activities of the Steering Committee of I. S. S. C. P. The assigned subject concerns the problems met by students who have graduated from high school. We were asked to contribute ideas which might be used to aid students in solving their problems. A motion was made and passed that Miss Dilley act as chairman of the Committee and appoint her own committee of helpers.

Delegates elected to attend the National Council of Teachers of English convention November 23-26 at Buffalo, New York, were: Hazel Anderson, Mina Terry, and Liesette McHarry; alternates, Alice Grant and Ellen Burkhart.

Miss Mina Terry, the vice president, called for reports from each district leader.

Miss Ellen Burkhart, chairman of the Nominating Committee, presented the following slate of officers for 1949-1950. The slate was accepted by the Executive Committee.

1. President—Miss Mina Terry
2. Vice president—Miss Addie Hochstrasser
3. Secretary—Edith Groom
4. Treasurer—Mrs. Zada Templeton
5. Program Chairman—Miss Hila Stone
6. Program Committee—Miss Alice Grant, Miss Eleona Andman
7. Library English Chairman—Miss Mary Heller
8. Editor of the Bulletin—Professor J. N. Hook
9. Assistant Editor—Miss Margaret Newman
10. Public Relations Chairman—Miss Mary Miller
11. Curriculum Chairman—Miss Liesette McHarry
12. Chairman of Committee of Committees—Miss Hazel Anderson

Miss McHarry reported that the American Literature Committee had completed its study with a report from each experimental school ready to be published in the *Bulletin*. This committee has finished its work and has disbanded.

Mr. Trimble gave a report on the English conference to be held December 2 and 3 on the U. of I. campus, sponsored by the College of Education. We are asked to attend and support this conference, which is for elementary as well as secondary teachers.

A motion was made and passed that we are most desirous of working with the College of Education to make the conference of December 2 and 3 a success.

A motion was made and passed that the president take the necessary steps to invite the elementary teachers to join the Illinois Association of Teachers of English.

Respectfully submitted,

HAZEL ANDERSON,
Secretary pro tem

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING

Illinois Association of Teachers of English
Urbana, Saturday, October 29, 1949

At ten A. M. the general session of the Illinois Association was called to order by Mary Louise Heller, President, who welcomed the group. A report of the Curriculum Committee was given by Miss Liesette McHarry. Miss Mary Miller urged members to attend the meeting of the National Council in Buffalo in November. Mr. Trimble explained the program of the conference for the teachers of English to be held on the University Campus on December 2 and 3 and invited all members of the Illinois Association to attend.

Miss Addie Hochstrasser, program chairman, introduced the speaker of the day, Jessie Stuart, whose topic was "From Farm Boy to Author." Following his speech, President Mary Louise Heller adjourned the general session. At the luncheon which followed in the Illini Union, a pupil of Miss Hochstrasser sang several ballads, including an original one written for Jesse Stuart.

Respectfully submitted,

EDITH GROOM, *Secretary*